

Devotionals from Revelation

Short excerpts from the “Manna Daily Devotional,” published by Northland Cathedral, Kansas City. Author Deborah Galyen.

Note: These devotionals were written as part of an ongoing “read through the Bible” series in a local church. Within one or two Biblical chapters, the devotional highlights one basic truth and expresses it in about 100 words. The comments are intended for a very wide audience (large multigenerational church), and for that reason, a more detailed life application is left up to the reader.

Revelation 1

“I am ... the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (1:18). John was writing during a time when Christians were persecuted, sometimes to the point of death. In a vision, John saw Jesus as “the living One” who had experienced humanity’s greatest fear: death. But Jesus is alive, and He holds the keys to death – which means that He can free us too.

The Roman Empire was afraid of Christians because they could not be controlled by the threat of death. By trusting in the resurrected Jesus, in any time, place, or culture, we are free to truly live.

Revelation 2

“I know your deeds and your toil and your perseverance . . .” (v2). God knows His people intimately. He affirmed the Ephesian believers for their dedication to truth; they accurately recognized and rejected false teachers (v2). But, they had “left their first love” (v4). In their zeal for sound doctrine and hard work, they had forgotten their passionate love for God. God commanded them to repent and return to the basics: love for their Redeemer.

God calls the church back to Himself: “He who has an ear, let him hear” (v7).

Revelation 3

“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent” (3:19). God gave specific words of correction and/or encouragement to the seven churches of Asia (1:4). The church at Smyrna faced suffering (2:10), while those at Thyatira were warned about the false prophetess Jezebel (2:20). God told the dead Sardis church to “Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain” (3:2). Those in Laodicea were blinded by wealth and urged to repent (v15-18).

God is always knocking at the door of our hearts (3:20). When we respond, we receive salvation and loving correction, too, helping us grow to full maturity.

Revelation 5-7

“And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found to open the book” (5:4). John’s sorrow suggests what life is like without the hope of Christ. This special book seemed to hold truth, but no one was worthy to look into it. John’s sadness reflects our frustrated longings for peace, for joy, and for a permanent home. Finally, an elder said, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion ... has overcome so as to open the book!” (5:5).

The sadness and brokenness of life on earth has an answer. The Lion has overcome sin and death, so we can taste real joy.

Revelation 6-7

“. . . behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation, and all tribes and peoples and tongues . . . clothed in white robes” (7:9). These victorious, worshipful people are all martyrs (v14). They have come out of “the great tribulation,” and John sees them in God’s presence, praising Him. Their hardships on earth, Paul said, don’t compare to the glories of heaven. The Lamb is their shepherd, wiping tears from their eyes.

Victory on earth looks very different from God’s perspective. Many who quietly grieve, who suffer in Jesus’ name, will shine in eternity.

Revelation 8-9

“And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and earthquake” (8:5). The fire of the altar before God’s throne included incense and “the prayers of the saints.” When the angel threw this fire to the earth, it caused huge explosions. The prayers of God’s people were powerful.

John’s vision reminded suffering believers that their prayers were not forgotten or useless. Our prayers are precious and important on earth and in heaven.

Revelation 10-12

“And there was war in heaven” (12:7). Though events depicted in John’s visions are difficult to understand, this statement is clear. From the moment of the fall, the devil has been at war with humanity, seeking to deceive and destroy. Ephesians 6 and I Peter 5 warn believers to be on guard, using every spiritual weapon to resist temptation. John’s visions remind us that though we are now caught up in this great battle, there will be an end. We will not struggle forever.

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord, and of His Christ.” (11:15).

Revelation 13-14

“And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach . . . to every nation and tribe and tongue . . . ” (14:6). Though Revelation uses language from Jewish apocalyptic (“end of the world”) writings like Daniel, it emphasizes the *global* mission of Jesus Christ. John saw in heaven “a great multitude . . . from every nation and all tribes . . . ” (7:9). This is the Body of Christ, full of differences but united by His blood.

No matter our various backgrounds, together we have a new destiny. Jesus redeemed us in order to create “a kingdom and priests to our God” (5:9-10).

Revelation 15-18

“Woe, woe, the great city . . . adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!” (18:17). In Revelation, “Babylon” is a powerful, prosperous, and evil city. It represents human achievement, twisted by sin, which instead of glorifying God is used only to hoard wealth, live for pleasure, and oppress the weak. “All things

that were luxurious and splendid” (v14) filled the city, and yet, in John’s vision, God destroyed the city in an hour.

Human achievement, no matter how amazing, is eternally worthless if we are working against the purposes of God’s kingdom.

Revelation 19

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True” (v11). John’s visions were given so that the church, especially in times of trouble, might see *reality*. Reality does include conflict, and believers in John’s day were suffering, just as they still do today in many places. But what we see with our eyes isn’t everything. God showed John a glimpse of the truth: our triumphant, powerful, “King of Kings” is over all.

Though we often feel vulnerable, confused, and weak, our hope and strength is in the mighty Savior, and He is coming.

Revelation 20-21

“And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple” (21:22). Jerusalem’s temple was a sacred physical place where God met with humans. Now, through the Spirit, He dwells in and among us. In the New Jerusalem, we will enjoy God’s presence, together, without the shadows of suffering or sin. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people” (21:3).

The best of earth can only hint at the joy to come: a kingdom without a temple, where God walks among His redeemed children.

Revelation 22

“And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb ...” (v1-2). Both the water of life and the tree of life are symbols of the Life which is only available in Jesus Christ. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that He was the “living water” (John 4:10). The tree of life in Eden was hidden from humanity after we sinned (Genesis 3:22-24), and we started on the path that leads to death.

Yet God’s will for us is always Life. Jesus willingly embraced the death we deserved so that we can, through Him, drink deeply of Life, now and in eternity.